

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-12 /104 W

-----087608 132354Z /45

R 121720Z OCT 77

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8262

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USUN

CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 2367

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, SS, MR, AG, MO

SUBJECT: SAHARA WATCH: POLISARIO ATTACK CHINGUETTI

REF: (A) NOUAKCHOTT 2108, (B) NOUAKCHOTT 1654(NOTAL), (C)

NOUAKCHOTT 1642 (NOTAL), (D) DAKAR DAO 2215507 AUG 77

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED NEWSPAPER CHAAB UNDER BANNER HEADLINE "NEW ALGERIAN AGGRESSION ON CHINGUETTI" REPORTS OCTOBER 12 THAT POLISARIO ATTACKED CHINGUETTI ON SUNDAY OCTOBER 9. ACCORDING CHAAB, POLISARIO LOSSES WERE 25 EAD AND 3 VEHICLES (2 LANDROVERS AND ONE TRUCK) DESTROYED AND GIRM CASUALTIES WERE 5 CIVILIANS DEAD (INCLUDING 2 CHILDREN), 6 CIVILIANS WOUNDED, ONE MILITARY DEAD AND 5 MILITARY WOUNDED. AFP DESPATCH DATED CONFIDENTIAL

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OCTOBER 11 REPORTS POLISARIO FORCE OF 60 VEHICLES WAS SIGHTED BY MAURITANIAN AIR FORCE 24 HOURS BEFORE ATTACK; THAT MAURITANIAN FORCE FROM AUSERT WAS DISPATCHED ON OCTOBER 10 TO INTERCEPT POLISARIO FORCE WICH IS HEADED NORTHEAST BACK TO ALGERIA; REPORTS CASUALTY FIGURES BUT SAYS 3 ONT 2 CHILDRENKILLED. CHAAB REPORT ON CHINGUETTI ATTACK IS FIRST LOCAL NEWSPAPER REPORTING OF MILITARY ACTIVITY SINCE JULY 20 (REF C).

END UNCLASSIFIED.

2. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. AFP CORRESPONDENT TOLD EMBOFF THAT ACTING MINISTER DEFENSE STATED GIRM FORCES HAD BEEN ORDERED NOT TO PURSUE WITHDRAWING POLISARIO RAIDERS BECAUSE OF DANGER OF AMBUSH IN RUGGED TERRAIN AROUND CHINGUETTI. MINISTER DECLARED NEW GIRM TACTIC IS TO DEFEND POPULATION CENTERS; WHEN ATTACKED, GIRM MILITARY WILL NOT ATTEMPT TO PURSUE ATTACKING FORCES, BUT WILL INSTEAD TRY TO INTERCEPT RETREATING FORCES ALONG THEIR WITHDRAWAL ROUTE.

3. MAURITANIAN AIR FORCE HAS BEEN REDUCED TO 7 PLANES: TWO SKYVANS, TWO DEFENDERS, TWO CESSNAS, AND ONE (JUST DELIVERED) BUFFALO. SINCE LOSS OF DEFENDER JULY 15 (REPORTED REFS B AND D), GIRM HAS LOST TWO ADDITIONAL DEFENDERS AND ONE CESSNA IN NON-BATTLE RELATED ACCIDENTS (PILOT ERROR). EMBOFFS HAVE SEEN BUFFALO OPERATING OUT OF NOUAKCHOTT AIRPORT SINCE OCTOBER 8; IT IS REPORTEDLY BEING PILOTED BY FRENCH CITIZEN PILOT AND BY COMMANDER OF MAURITANIAN AIR FORCE, LT.COL. 'ABD 'AL-QAADIR.

4. SPANISH MILITARY ATTACHE CONFIRMED THAT GIRM MILITARY HAS OPTED FOR DEFENSIVE POSTURE AND IS NO LONGER CARRYING OUT OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS. HE NOTED THAT GIRM FORCES ARE UNDER INSTRUCTIONS NOT TO PURSUE POLISARIO FORCES IN ORDER TO AVOID ALMOST INEVITABLE POLISARIO AMBUSHES. HE REPORTED CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT 570 MOROCCANS AND OVER 1000 GIRM MILITARY HAVE ESTABLISHED EFFECTIVE DEFENSE PERIMETER AROUND ZOUERATE AND THAT NOUADHIBOU IS EFFECTIVELY DEFENDED FROM LAND ATTACK BY WALL ACROSS PENINSULA NORTH OF CITY. POLISARIO LOSSES SEPTEMBER 24 OUDANE BATTLE OCCURED WHEN POLISARIO PENETRATED MINE FIELD LAID BY GIRM TO DEFEND CITY. ACCORDING SPANIARD, MOROCCAN T-6S STATIONED IN DAKHLA ARE FLOWN BY MOROCCANS BUT SPORT MAURITANIAN FLAG. SPANISH ATTACHE REPORTS GIRM MILITARY FORCES SUFFERING FROM POOR MORALE AND THAT ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION AMONG GIRM OFFICER STAFF RAMPANT, SPECIFICALLY COLONEL VIAH MAYOUF, GIRM REGIONAL MILITARY COMMANDER IN MAURITANIAN SECTION OF FORMER SPANISH SAHARA, IS RUMORED TO BE SELLING DAMAGED AND CAPTURED MILITARY EQUIPMENT FOR PERSONNEL PROFIT.

5. FRENCH MILITARY ATTACHE REPORTS THAT 15 FRENCH INSTRUCTORS HAVE ARRIVED IN ATAR, AND 120 GIRM OFFICER CANDIDATES BEGAN TRAINING IN EARLY OCTOBER. FORTY ADDITIONAL FRENCH MILITARY PERSONNEL HAVE ARRIVED IN NOUAKCHOTT TO ASSIST GIRM MILITARY WITH ORGANIZATION, SUPPLY AND MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES. ALTHOUGH GIRM SERIOUSLY HAMPERED BY LACK OF FIELD EXPERIENCE AND INSTRUCTION, FRENCH MILITARY

PERSONNEL WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO ACCOMPANY GIRM MILITARY
UNITS IN FIELD. FRENCH MILITARY ATTACHE OBSERVED GIRM
MILITARY FORCES ARE UNDERSTANDABLY INEXPERIENCED SINCE
OVERWHELMING MAJORITY HAS BEEN RECRUITED PAST TWO YEARS, AND
EXPRESSED VIEW THAT LOSSES IN AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER
BATTLES WERE QUITE SMALL CONSIDERING THAT GIRM MILITARY
STRENGTH NOW EXCEEDS 15,000 MEN.

6. COMMENT: MINISTER INTERIOR STATEMENT THAT GIRM HAS ADOPTED
DEFENSIVE POSTURE IS FRANK ADMISSION THAT GIRM CANNOT AT THIS
TIME CARRY WAR TO POLISARIO. THUS, POLISARIO HAS
UNCHALLENGED FREEDOM TO ROAM NORTH AND EAST OF COUNTRY AND
WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO ATTACK POPULATED AREAS. UNPOPULAR
AND CROSSIVE WAR CONTINUES; INCREASING HUMAN AND MATERIAL
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LOSSES UNDERMINE MAURITANIAN PUBLIC MORALE;
AND GOVERNMENT ARE INCREASINGLY FREUSTRATED BY THEIR
INABILITY TO WIN WAR OR TERMINATE IT.

HANDYSIDE

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